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SUBJECT: POLITICAL PARTIES POINT FINGERS AFTER VIOLENCE IN NONGOMA

REF: A) 08 DURBAN 71; B) 08 DURBAN 69

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11. (SBU) Summary: In response to violence that erupted on February 1 in Nongoma, northern KwaZulu Natal, where African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) supporters attended election rallies held in the same area on the same day, ANC and IFP representatives lashed out at one another but did not admit any fault. Seven ANC members suffered injuries during the clashes, including an ANC Member of Parliament, Prince Zeblon Zulu. Political intolerance and violence will be a factor in KZN during the upcoming national elections, and unless party leaders play a stronger role, it is not likely that the police and Independent Electoral Commission will be able to control the situation. End summary.

Historical context: Long-running Clashes

12. (U) Political violence before 1994's first general elections claimed close to an estimated 20,000 lives. Much of the violence occurred between ANC and IFP supporters in KwaZulu-Natal. In 1994, ANC President Nelson Mandela and IFP Leader Prince Mangosuthu Buthelezi signed a Peace Accord, which led to the decline of political violence. However, in KZN incidents of political intolerance and targeted political killings continue to take place. In the past few weeks, the number of violent incidents has increased. Six killings, including a blatant assassination of Chief Mbongeleni Zondi (a close friend and relative of ANC President Jacob Zuma) have taken place. (Note: Recent revelations in the Zondi murder case indicate that the motive may have been related to taxi business rivalries rather than politics).

ANC and IFP hold Election Rallies in Nongoma

13. (U) Police had their hands full on February 1 when both the ANC and the IFP held election rallies in Nongoma, (a town of about 200,000 people in Northern Zululand), which is known to be a traditional stronghold of the IFP. ANC President Jacob Zuma addressed the ANC rally, attended by about 3,000 supporters, most of whom the ANC brought in by bus. Senior provincial ANC leaders including ANC Chairperson Dr. Zweli Mkhize and Premier Sibusiso Ndebele also came to Nongoma, in a show of ANC power.

Shots Fired, Buses Stoned and Roads Blocked

14. (SBU) ANC Member of Parliament Prince Zeblon Zulu's car came under gun fire as he left the ANC rally. Prince Zulu, his son and daughter-in law were injured during the attack. ANC Provincial Secretary Senzo Mchunu told a press conference on February 2 that people wearing IFP T-shirts and carrying traditional weapons had blocked the roads leading to the ANC

rally venue and stoned ANC buses. Mchunu also reported that a well-known IFP councilor on January 31 shot ANC local deputy leader Mantobela Ngcobo. Mr. Ngcobo was injured and hospitalized. The IFP councilor, Jeremiah Mavundla, and his wife were arrested and appeared in court in connection with the shooting of Ngcobo and possession of an unlicensed firearm.

IFP Blames Broader Intolerance

15. (SBU) In a statement issued by the IFP on February 2, IFP National Organizer Albert Mncwango unequivocally condemned the violence in Nongoma, but did not deny that those who were involved in acts of political intolerance and violence in Nongoma were IFP members. Mncwango also said February 1 events should not be viewed in isolation, but rather within a broader context of "ongoing political intolerance" in KZN. Mncwango cited the recent killing of IFP members as an indication that all parties have suffered from violence. Meanwhile, party leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, has not publicly criticized IFP members for violent acts but rather called on all party leaders to join him in "urging calm" and demanding that all party followers "absolutely eschew violence and intimidation."

ANC Launches an Appeal with the IEC

16. (U) KZN ANC Chairperson Dr. Zweli Mkhize confirmed on February 3 that the ANC lodged a complaint with the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) about the events of Nongoma, asking the IEC to investigate and determine whether Nongoma will be conducive for a free and fair election. IEC KZN Chief Electoral Officer Mawethu Mosery has confirmed receiving the ANC complaint.

Analysts Call on Parties to Rein in Members

17. (SBU) Political analysts in KZN denounced the violence in Nongoma and called on party leaders to rein in their members to prevent incidents of political intolerance and violence.

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Political analyst Protas Madlala accused party leaders of being lax in dealing with members who intimidated other supporters. University of KwaZulu Natal-based violence analyst and monitor, Mary de Haas told the Pol-Econ Assistant that she agrees with Madlala's views and further noted, "leaders were scared to alienate their supporters." De Haas also said the role of police in maintaining order is important and that police need to act in an impartial manner.

18. (SBU) Comment: The police and IEC face a major challenge in dealing with party strongholds and alleged "no-go" zones in KZN province. Unless the leaders of political parties take a stronger stance and punish members for violent acts, free and unhindered political activity in areas considered to be strongholds of one party or another will not be possible. The ANC's decision to hold a rally in an area known to be a traditional stronghold of the IFP, where ANC support is not evident, appears to have been calculated and provocative, and may have been designed to draw attention away from its members' intimidation of COPE members and disruption of COPE activities. (ANC members have also declared the province a "no-go" zone for COPE, and its supporters have disrupted COPE meetings in areas known to be traditional strongholds of the ANC--see reftels). Yet despite the unwelcome reception of COPE by ANC members in KZN, the main contest in this province will still be between the ANC and IFP--so the leaders of these parties have the greatest role to play in condemning violence. COPE so far appears unable to pose a major threat to the electoral support of both the ANC and the IFP in KZN.

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